

had treated both his eyes, they said, "We will come back here without fail in two days. Don't forget to wait for us." Before long both his eyes grew bright and he recovered his eyesight. On the promised day he waited for them, but they never returned.

The note says: How good it was for a blind man to recover his eyesight in this present life and to travel far along the Great Way,⁴ having thrown away his cane, seeing clearly and acting firmly. Indeed, we know that it happened because of the power of Kannon and the great devotion of the blind man.

I 3

On a Man Who Made a Vow to Copy the Hoke-kyō and Who Was Saved From a Dark Pit Devoid of Sunlight Owing to the Power of His Vow¹

In Aita district, Mimasaka province 美作國英多郡,² there was a state-owned iron mine. In the reign of Empress Abe, a provincial magistrate drafted ten workmen and had them enter the iron mine to dig out ore. All of a sudden, the entrance to the mine caved in. Surprised and terrified, the workmen made a rush for the exit, and nine of them barely managed to escape. Before the last man got out, the entrance was blocked. The magistrate and people, high and low, grieved for him, for they thought he had been crushed to death in the landslide. Wailing in grief, his family painted an image of Kannon and copied the scriptures to give merits to the dead man, thus completing the seventh day service.³

The man, however, was sealed in the pit alone, saying to himself, "I have not yet fulfilled my vow which I made recently to copy the *Hoke-kyō*. If my life is saved, I will fulfill it without fail." In the dark pit he felt regret and sorrow greater than he had ever experienced.

Meanwhile he noticed that the door of the pit opened a little and

4. 太方 *taihō*; the path of Buddha.

1. Cf. *Myōhōki* (I, On a Servant in Yeh 鄭下人), *Sanbō ekotoba* (II, 17), *Hokke kenki* (III, 108), *Fusō ryakki* (VI, Genmyō), *Konjaku monogatari* (XIV, 9).

2. Or Agata district; present Aita-gun, Okayama-ken 岡山縣英多郡.

3. Or "seventh day services" which are usually continued for seven seven-day periods during which the dead person's future existence is decided. But from the following story we choose "seventh day service" as more probable than a longer period.

a ray of sunlight came in. A novice⁴ entered through the opening and brought him a bowl filled with delicacies, saying, "Your family made offerings of food and drink so that I might save you. I have come to you since you have been wailing in grief." So saying, he went out. Not long after he had gone, a hole opened above the man's head, and sunlight flooded the pit. The opening was about two feet square and fifty feet high.

At the same time, about thirty men who had come into the mountain to collect vines passed near the hole. The man at the bottom of the pit saw them pass and cried, "Take my hand." The workmen in the mountain heard what sounded like the hum of a mosquito. Out of curiosity they dropped a vine into the pit with a stone at the end of the vine. The man took hold of it and pulled. It was evident that there was someone at the bottom. They made a rope and a basket of vines, tied lengths of vine rope to the four corners of the basket, and lowered it into the pit with a pulley set up at the opening. When the man at the bottom got into the basket, they pulled him up and sent him home.

Nothing could surpass the joy of his family. The provincial magistrate asked him, "What good did you do?" The man told him the whole story. Greatly moved, the magistrate organized a devotees' association⁵ to cooperate in copying the *Hoke-kyō* and held a dedication ceremony.

This took place owing to the divine power of the *Hoke-kyō* and the favor of Kannon.⁶ There is no doubt about this.

I 4

On Receiving an Immediate Penalty of Violent Death Because of Hitting the Reciter of the Dharani of the Thousand-armed Kannon¹

In Kaga district, Echizen province 越前國加賀郡,² there was an of-

4. An incarnated Kannon.

5. 知識 *chishiki*.

6. This story is a rare case of Kannon and *Hoke-kyō* combined in one story.

1. Cf. *Sanbō ekotoba* (II, 8).

2. Present Kawakita-gun and Ishikawa-gun, Ishikawa-ken 石川縣河北郡, 石川郡. Since Kaga district became Kaga province in 823, this story offers one evidence for dating the compilation of the *Nihon ryōiki* before 823. See *Ruijū sandai-kyaku*, V (Kōnin 14:2:3).

ficial in charge of vagrants.³ He hunted for them and made them work on temporary projects, forcing them to pay production and labor taxes. At that time there was a man registered in the capital of Nara, whose name was Ono no asomi Niwamaro 小野朝臣庭麿.⁴ He became a lay brother and recited the dharani of the Thousand-armed Kannon. He led a life of self-discipline, wandering in the mountains in that district.

In the spring of the sixth year of the cock, the third year of the Jingo keiun era,⁵ on the twenty-seventh of the third month, the official⁶ was in the village of Mimakawa 御馬河里⁷ in that district about noon. He came across the ascetic and said to him, "Where do you come from?" The man replied, "I am practicing the path; I am not a layman." In anger the official accused him, saying, "No, you are a vagrant. Why didn't you pay your taxes?" Though the official bound and hit him to force him to work, the ascetic refused and sorrowfully quoted a proverb to him, saying, "There is a proverb that says: 'When lice from the clothes climb up to the head, they turn black; when lice from the head go down to the clothes, they turn white.' I carry the dharani on the top of my head and scriptures on my back so that I may not be persecuted by lay people. Why did you hit and humiliate one who upholds Mahayana teachings? They have a miraculous power, as I will now demonstrate."⁸

The official bound the scripture called the *Senju-kyō* 千手經⁹ with a rope and dragged it along the ground. His house was about half a mile¹⁰ from the spot where he had hit the ascetic. When he reached his house and wanted to get down from the horse, he was immobilized and could not dismount. At that instant he flew through the sky with his horse until he was suspended over the spot where he had hit the

3. 浮浪人 *ukarebito*; those who left their registered place of birth to evade taxation; no longer under the control of the *ritsuryō* government, they sought the protection of powerful nobles and local gentry or pretended to be monks and nuns. The first prohibition against the practice is recorded in 709. See *Shoku Nihongi* IV (Wadō 2: 10: 14); VI (Reiki 1: 5: 1 and Yōrō 1: 5: 17, 4: 3: 17, 4: 5: 21). See Naoki, "Nara jidai ni okeru furō ni tsuite," *Shirin*, XXXIV (No. 3, 1951), 19-39.

4. The Ono family is descended from the imperial family, according to the *Shinsen shōjiroku*. See *Nihon shoki*, XXIX (Tenmu 13: 11: 1); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 366.

5. 769.

6. The official who hunted vagrants was often of the local gentry, and he made them work for him.

7. Present Mima-machi, Kanazawa-shi 金澤市三馬町

8. This may also be translated as follows: "If you have a miraculous power, please demonstrate it now." In this case, it is addressed to the scriptures and not to the official.

9. See n. 11, below, and also Chap. II(3)b, n. 138.

10. 一里; 1 *ri* is 0.41 mile, although 1 *ri* equals 2.45 miles according to the present standards of measurement.

ascetic. About noon on the following day he fell to the ground after having been in the air for one day and one night. His body was broken into pieces, just like a bagful of scattered needles. Everyone who witnessed it was filled with terror and awe.

The *Senju-kyō*¹¹ gives a relevant passage: "Great divine dharani¹² can bring branches, blossoms, and fruit even to a dead tree. To speak ill of this dharani means to speak ill of Buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand of the River Ganges. . . ." A Mahayana scripture¹³ has a passage to the same effect: "The sin of speaking ill of wise men is equal to that of destroying temples and pagodas in eighty-four thousand counties."¹⁴

15

On Receiving an Immediate Penalty of Violent Death

Because of Hitting a Begging Novice

Inukai no sukune Maoyu 犬養宿禰眞老¹ lived in the village of Saki, north of the Imperial Mausoleum of Ikume 活目陵北之佐岐村² in the capital of Nara. Innately evil-minded, he hated mendicants. In the reign of Empress Abe, a novice went to Maoyu's door to beg food. Far from making an offering, Maoyu robbed him of his surplice and accused him, saying, "What kind of monk are you?" The mendicant replied, "I am a self-ordained monk."³ Maoyu chased him away, and the mendicant left, filled with ill will.

That evening Maoyu cooked some carp in soup and chilled it until it was set.⁴ The next morning at about eight o'clock he awoke and tasted the carp while still in bed. When he was about to drink some rice wine, however, he vomited black blood and fell on his side as

11. 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經 (*Taishō*, XX, 111).

12. 大神咒 *daishinju*; in this case, *Senju* dharani or *Daihishin* dharani.

13. 方廣經 *Hōkō-kyō*.

14. Unlocated.

1. The Inukai family was originally in charge of hunting and guarding public granaries.

2. Emperor Suinin's mausoleum was located on the Third Street, Third Avenue, on the West Side of Nara, and the Village of Saki is at present Saki-machi, Nara-shi 奈良縣佐紀町, not far from Yakushi-ji.

3. 自度 *jido*.

4. When the soup is chilled, it becomes gelatinous.